

CHAPTER 2: ALTERNATIVES AND EIS SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Jefferson Park Site Plan involved the community from the spring of 2001 through January, 2002. A project advisory team (PAT), appointed by the Superintendent of the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), was comprised of representatives of over 20 key Jefferson Park stakeholder groups. The PAT was intended to facilitate communication to the design team from the users perspective during the Jefferson Park site planning process. The PAT reviewed and provided significant recommendations on the development of the Jefferson Park site plan. Meetings of the PAT were open to the public.

Parks hosted open houses in the fall of 2001. These open houses provided broader public input into the development of the plan for Jefferson Park. The PAT made final recommendations on the Site Plan in January of 2002.

On February 7, 2002, Parks issued a *Determination of Significance and Request for Comments on Scope of EIS* for the proposed improvements for Jefferson Park. This notice was published in the Daily Journal of Commerce on February 7 and February 14, 2002. The notice was also posted to the Jefferson Park web page of the Seattle Parks Department Web site at <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/parkspaces/jeffparksiteplan.htm>.

A formal scoping meeting, as required by SEPA and announced in the above-described notice, was held on February 19, 2002 at 7 p.m. at the Jefferson Community Center. Meeting attendees were provided with a description of the process for developing the site plan improvements. Design concepts and options for new structures and park amenities were also presented. The emphasis of the meeting was on providing attendees the opportunity to present their comments and concerns regarding the potential environmental impacts of the proposed site improvements. Comments were accepted through March 5, 2002.

Comments from the scoping meeting and subsequent scoping period were collected, reviewed, and summarized. The main environmental concerns included potential impacts from lighting of fields or other recreation areas, safety and security, and the source of fill material for the North Reservoir area. These issues ~~are-were~~ addressed in ~~this-the~~ Draft EIS. The need for a full-sized, dedicated soccer field in the neighborhood was also identified.

On May 8, 2002, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) was issued by Parks. A public hearing was held on May 30, 2002, 7 p.m. at the Jefferson Community Center. Meeting attendees were provided with a description of the EIS process and an overview of the primary project impacts. Attendees were invited to present their comments orally or in writing. Comments on the Draft EIS were accepted through June 7, 2002. Testimony from the public hearing was transcribed and is provided in this document, along with written comments. (See Appendix C.)

Proponent's Objectives

Through the Beacon Hill Neighborhood Plan planning process, it was recognized that Jefferson Park was not meeting the needs of its users in the Beacon Hill neighborhood. For example, the rehabilitation of Jefferson Park was identified in the North Beacon Hill Neighborhood Plan (1999) as one of its highest priority items.

The Beacon Hill community, along with Parks, intend to create a "vibrant and active park." A rehabilitated Jefferson Park would contribute to the quality of public places and open spaces in the area. The proposed changes are intended to integrate the various active and passive recreation opportunities within the Park, add new features that help meet the recreational needs of the community, and capitalize on the views to the Olympic Mountains, Elliott Bay, and the downtown skyline.

The Jefferson Park "vision" is intended to be an organizing principle and basis for the Park's new design. According to the *Jefferson Park Site Planning — Planning Report* (The Portico Group, 2002), Jefferson Park "will be a place of great beauty that welcomes members of the neighborhood, city, and visitors with a mixture of quiet spaces and active facilities, where community interaction is encouraged. Jefferson Park will:

- celebrate the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Beacon Hill neighborhood;
- respect and respond to the traditions of the Olmsted legacy;
- and build upon the best physical characteristics of the site, especially the views."

Alternatives Considered but Not Selected

The ~~three~~-five site plan alternatives developed by the design team and eliminated from further consideration by the PAT included:

- Alternative 1 - Pond and Meadow
- Alternative 2 - The Circle and Flying Wedge
- Alternative 3 - A Central Meadow
- Preferred Plan (October 2001)
- Preferred Plan (November 2001)

The Pond and Meadow alternative consisted of pedestrian paths, a play meadow, naturalistic ponds and wetlands, and earthwork mounds at the north end of the Park. These features created areas for picnicking, passive recreation (including the enjoyment of views of the City, Elliott Bay, and Olympic Mountains), and active recreation. The north and south ends of the Park were connected by a pedestrian path along the existing lawn bowling area and the nine-hole golf course.

The Circle and Flying Wedge alternative created a formal open space at the north end of the Park. This alternative also showed an expanded Community Center, an earthwork sculpture incorporating the north and west embankments of the former North Reservoir, water features that would be

designed to interpret the story of Seattle's water supply (e.g., waterpipe fountains, streams, wetlands), and areas for gatherings and recreational activities such as Samoan cricket. A circular promenade incorporated architectural and sculptural trellises to create gateways and framework for art fairs and markets. Spaces were also created for visitors to enjoy the views, to picnic, and enjoy passive and active recreation opportunities.

The Central Meadow alternative focused on a large pastoral meadow at the center of the Park. The slope of the Central Meadow would be oriented to the neighboring community to the west. This open space was intended for passive and active non-organized sports use. Pedestrian pathways connected this area with Park entries and other activity areas of Jefferson Park.

None of these alternatives was selected by the PAT in its entirety. Instead, a "Preferred Plan" ~~or Jefferson Park Site Plan as it is now called,~~ was developed that incorporated the most desirable elements from the three alternatives described above as well as some new ideas. Two Preferred Plans were developed – one in October 2001 and a further-revised version in November 2001. After additional input from the community and the Seattle Design Commission, two "Consensus Plans" were developed that illustrate how the park might be developed both with and without the use of the South Reservoir area. The Consensus Plans are the precursors of evaluated in this EIS as the Jefferson Park Site Plan, Alternatives A and B described in this EIS. Illustrations of the ~~three five~~ alternatives ~~the Preferred Plan, and the Consensus Plans~~ described above ~~as precursors to the Jefferson Park Site Plan~~ are provided in Appendix A.

Alternatives Evaluated in the EIS

Three alternatives for the Jefferson Park Site Plan Improvements are evaluated in this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): Alternative A—Interim Plan, Alternative B—Long-range Plan, and Alternative C—No Action. Alternative A includes proposed improvements to the Jefferson Park Site Plan that are likely to be constructed in the next ~~four~~ eight years. Alternative B includes the project elements described for Alternative A as well as projects which are more longer-range, such as a second gymnasium, a pedestrian overpass, and opportunities for use of the South Reservoir area should it become available for park use in the future. The No Action Alternative will assume no major new construction or expansions to existing facilities, only maintenance of existing facilities, and minor landscape improvements and enhancements.

Alternative A — Interim Plan

Alternative A—Interim Plan consists of five major improvements and several smaller-scale improvements (such as a skateboard area, bocce ball court, etc.) located in the north half and southwest corner of the project area (Figure 2-1). Under this alternative, SPU's South Reservoir is assumed to be back in operation with a floating cover and SPU's North Reservoir area would become available for park use. These improvements are described in detail below.

Decommissioning of the North Reservoir

Activities related to decommissioning the North Reservoir would include draining, demolition, filling, and grading to create an area suitable for construction of the Great Meadow area. Approximately 70,000 cubic yards of on-site material would be re-graded and used on the site. The

concrete lining of the North Reservoir would likely be broken up and used as fill on site as well. Approximately 280,000 cubic yards of fill would be imported. One potential source of fill material is Sound Transit's Central Link Light Rail project, Beacon Hill station and tunnel segment. It is projected that there could be over 300,000 cubic yards of material made available to the region from that segment (Sound Transit, 1999). Other sources of fill may be used depending upon project timing, the quality of material removed from the Central Link project, and the contractor's preference. In any case, fill material for the proposed Great Meadow area would meet the requirements set forth in SMC 22.804.050 Grading Requirements. These requirements include the proportion of soil to rock, cleanliness of material (e.g., no solid waste, hazardous waste, or hazardous material is permitted), and other parameters such as composition of fill material (e.g., no organic material), degree of compaction, and moisture content. No contaminated fill material would be placed in the proposed Great Meadow area. Approximately 14,000 truck loads (28,000 truck trips) could occur during the conversion activities as fill material is transported to the project area.

Construction of "Great Meadow" Area

A large, informal meadow or grassy area (Great Meadow) would be constructed in the location of the decommissioned North Reservoir. This meadow area would provide space for quiet park activities as well as community gatherings, picnicking, youth soccer, other non-dedicated playfields, and other recreational opportunities. The Great Meadow would also contain water features such as ponds and a play stream. This open meadow area itself would not be lit, but the plan calls for pedestrian scale lights along major pathways. A picnic shelter would be constructed at the east edge of the meadow area. Construction would include grading to level the area and the preparation of a suitable substrate for new lawn area. No new parking would be provided specifically for this function, but parking is currently available along Beacon Avenue South from South Spokane Street to South Columbia Street.

Demolition and Reconstruction of Jefferson Community Center Activities Building

The Site Plan indicates construction of a building that would house community rooms, meeting rooms, offices and multi-purpose activity spaces, and is referred to in this document as the new Community Center Activities Building. The new Community Center Activities Building would be constructed in the location of the existing two tennis courts. It is anticipated that the new Community Center Activities Building would be approximately 14,000 square feet, either on one floor or possibly two. For purposes of analysis, a two-story structure will be evaluated because of potential impacts to views of the Park from passing vehicles and nearby residences, potential impacts from light and glare, and compatibility in bulk and scale with nearby residential areas.

Construction of the New Community Center Gymnasium

The existing Jefferson Community Center, built in 1929 with additions in 1949 and 1972, did not include a gymnasium. The Community Center currently uses a small gym located at Asa Mercer Middle School under a joint use agreement with the Seattle School District. The new 10,000 square foot Community Center Gymnasium would be constructed to the west of the existing Community Center. This gym would provide 7,200 square feet for basketball, volleyball, senior and adult

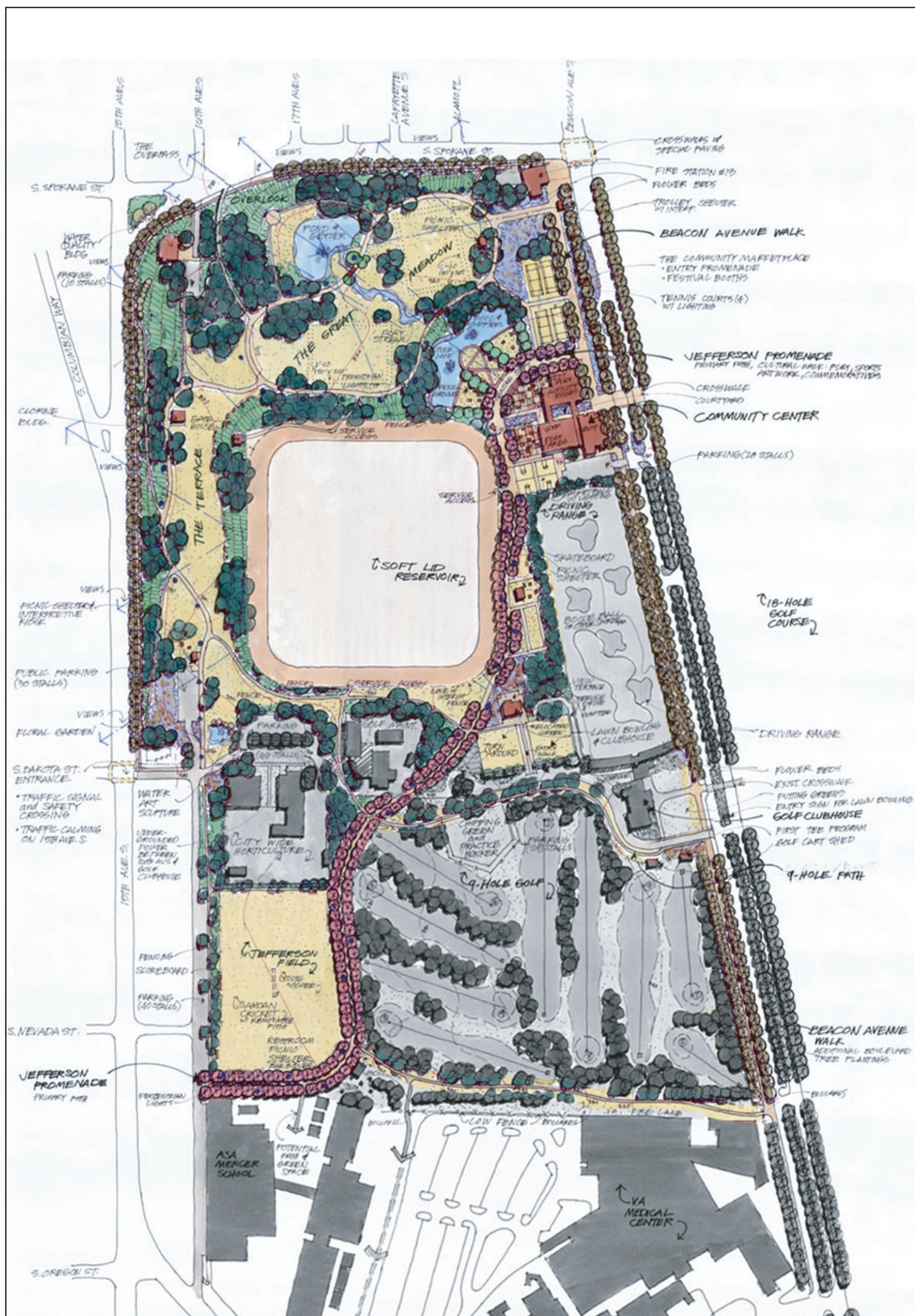


FIGURE 2-1
ALTERNATIVE A - CONCEPTUAL INTERIM PLAN
JEFFERSON PARK SITE PLAN EIS
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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fitness classes, and space for community meetings and celebrations. Approximately 28 parking spaces would be provided to accommodate additional traffic for the Community Center Gymnasium and Activities Building and other park amenities in the area. Parking would be provided in a surface lot located south of the existing Community Center.

Installation of New Traffic Signal at 15th Avenue South and South Dakota Street

The Site Plan proposes traffic improvements at 15th Avenue South and South Dakota Street to improve pedestrian and vehicle connections for nearby residents from 15th Avenue South into the Park. It would also increase safety and efficiency for Parks' trucks accessing the horticulture facility. These improvements could involve pedestrian-activated signals and/or loop detectors for vehicle ingress and egress.

Renovation of Jefferson Field

The existing Jefferson Field north of Asa Mercer Middle School would be renovated to support ~~youth~~ soccer and Samoan cricket. Perimeter grass areas would be irrigated and drainage would be improved. The existing Samoan cricket pitch would be replaced with a removable/coverable pitch. The existing grass field is proposed to be replaced with synthetic turf and field lighting would be added to extend use of the field into evening hours.

Construction of the "Terrace" along 15th Avenue South

The existing grassy slope along the west side of Jefferson Park along 15th Avenue South and north of South Dakota Street would be regraded and landscaped to create a gently sloping area that could be used for play and other passive recreational activities. Pathways, an interpretive kiosk/picnic shelter, and plantings would be added to this area.

Miscellaneous Park Improvements

Other improvements proposed as part of Alternative A include the replacement of the children's play area with a new expanded play area in a different location, construction of a skateboard area, construction of a bocce ball or similar sports court, and the addition of walkways, jogging paths, park furnishings, and art work. Alternative A would also include four new tennis courts north of the new Community Center Activities Building and two new basketball courts southwest of the new Community Center Gymnasium (Figure 2-1). All of these courts could be lit for evening use.

Alternative B—Long-range Plan

Alternative B would include all of the elements described for Alternative A along with additional site plan elements that would be constructed in the event a reconstructed, buried South Reservoir becomes available for park use in the future (Figure 2-2).

Construction of the "Sports Plateau"

The Jefferson Park Site Plan indicates a Sports Plateau in the location of the existing South Reservoir. A reconstructed South Reservoir would need to be a buried structure (also referred to as a reservoir with a "hard lid") in order to accommodate field uses in this location. At this time,

reconstruction of the South Reservoir has not been included in the City's Capital Improvement Program. ~~Seattle Public Utilities is proceeding with plans to reline and install a floating cover on the South Reservoir in the near future. SPU's action to install floating cover on the South Reservoir is independent of this environmental analysis being conducted for Parks on the Jefferson Park Site Plan.~~ Subsequent to the release of the Draft EIS, SPU, under the direction of the Mayor, developed an initiative to reconstruct buried reservoirs at all reservoirs in the City formerly planned for floating covers. Council approval of the Mayor's plan will be required prior to inclusion in the City's Capital Improvement Program. Under this alternative a buried reservoir is assumed to have been constructed and analysis is focused on the impacts of construction and operating the Sports Plateau.

The Sports Plateau would include a full-size baseball field, full-size soccer field, and a 400-meter running track around the soccer field. There would also be a concession stand and a restroom facility that would serve the sports fields. The southeast corner of the Sports Plateau would also contain a picnic area for general public use.

Construction of a Second Community Center Gymnasium

A second gymnasium building of approximately 10,000 square feet, along with code-required parking, is envisioned to replace the existing Community Center in this later phase of the project.

Construction of a Pedestrian Overpass

A new pedestrian overpass across South Spokane Street at approximately 16th Avenue South is also proposed as a future park improvement. This structure is intended to improve pedestrian access from the area north of the Park. The north landing for the overpass would be located in the right-of-way between 16th and 17th Avenues South and South Spokane Street. It is envisioned that this structure would be approximately 400 feet in length, 10 feet in width, and constructed of steel and concrete.

Alternative C—No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no major new construction or expansion of existing facilities would occur in the Jefferson Park project area. Maintenance of existing facilities as well as landscaping improvements and enhancements would continue to occur at the Park (Figure 1-1).



↑ NORTH
No Scale

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Original graphic by:ACT
Edits by:TBOAD
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Source: The Portico Group

FIGURE 2-2
ALTERNATIVE B - CONCEPTUAL LONG-RANGE PLAN
JEFFERSON PARK SITE PLAN EIS
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